# GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETINS

*Published Weekly by*

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

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*Photograph from University Museum, Philadelphia*

**SPHINXLIKE IS THIS MUTE MAYA FACE OF STONE**

**The mask from Piedras Negras, Maya site in Guatemala, like the monuments just discovered in Vera Cruz, is a remnant of a dead art and a ritual not fully explained (Bulletin No. 3).**

HOW TEACHERS MAY OBTAIN THE BULLETINS

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**General Headquarters, Washington, D. C.**


## Vatican City, a Thumb-Nail State of World Importance

THE world's smallest sovereign state has drawn worldwide attention to an extraordinary election. That state is the 108-acre independent territory of Vatican City. Barely three-score voters gathered there to cast their ballots, but 350 million Catholics around the globe were interested in the secret ritual that would designate their new spiritual leader, the 262nd Pope of the Church of Rome.

The Law of the Conclave, dating from the year 1274, governs this unusual and momentous election. It requires that some sixty cardinals shall be secluded in the Vatican Palace until a two-thirds vote has singled out the new Pope.

Their living quarters are in a part of a thousand-room palace which is also one of the most ornate art treasuries of the world. Raphael and Michelangelo were among its architects. Its adornment occupied the hands of Giotto, Leonardo da Vinci, Botticelli, Titian—indeed, the cream of Europe's sculptors, fresco painters, gold- and silversmiths, tapestry and mosaic makers, and illuminators of hand-copied manuscripts.

### Has Own Diplomats, Stamps, Coins, Flag, and "Standing Army"

Actual voting place of the cardinals is the famous Sistine Chapel, the rear wall of which is a-swirl with Michelangelo's frescoes of the Last Judgment—angels sounding the final trumpet, the dead arising, the placid array of saints and martyrs, and the despair of the damned.

No other sovereign state could provide its voters with such a "balloting booth." But Vatican City is unique in more ways than one. It is a political unit headed by a spiritual ruler.

Vatican City has its own flag, its own stamps, mints its own money, and exchanges its own diplomatic representatives with other governments. By a treaty concluded between the Pope and Italian authorities in 1929, jurisdiction of Italian police stops at the steps on the Vatican side of St. Peter's Square, and there Papal authority begins—a "foreign country" surrounded by Rome. Vatican City is policed by Swiss Guards, in uniform of red, blue, and yellow according to the taste of Michelangelo. The Guards were organized in the 16th century. The city has its own branch railroad (illustration, next page) and short-wave radio station, the latter installed by Marconi, Italy's father of radio.

Within the walls of Vatican City exists a complete city-state; relatively little of Vatican City is residential. There are a mere thousand inhabitants. Apartments for employees, barracks for guards, dormitories for students at the Ethiopian College, playgrounds for children occupy a fraction of the space. The garage, the grocery, the power plant, and the printing shop for the city's newspapers (one in Latin) occupy a little more. But most of the space is given over to St. Peter's, the largest church in the world, the Papal Palace, and the city's numerous museums, libraries, art galleries, and gardens.

### During Early Conclaves, Cardinals on Slim Diet

The supreme authority is the Pope, elected for life by the oldest balloting procedure still in use for European rulers. The elective Conclave of cardinals has given a special meaning to the word for a conference behind locked doors (*conclave* comes from the Latin *cum clave*, "with a key"). The medieval imprisonment of the cardinals, from which the modern Conclave has developed, resulted from a delay of two years and nine months in the choice of Pope Gregory X in 1271. Impatient local authorities locked up the cardinals to speed their decision. Thereafter it was decreed that cardinals should deliberate over a new Pope while locked in a single room without hangings or partitions, having no communication with the outside world. Food, handed in through a window, was limited to one dish per meal after three days, and five days later the diet was restricted to bread, water, and wine. This regimen sometimes produced an election within a single day or a week.

For the Conclave of modern times, a spacious section of the Vatican Palace—two or three floors—is temporarily walled up, leaving a single door for use. A kitchen and the Sistine Chapel are included. An apartment is prepared for each cardinal, three or four "cells" furnished with monastic simplicity and draped with cloth: purple if the cardinal was elevated to the purple by the late Pope, green if not. Barbers, cooks, and physicians move into the restricted area; then the cardinals withdraw into it, with secretaries and servants, and lock the door behind them.

Twice a day the cardinals leave their cells to assemble in the Sistine Chapel for voting, behind a bolted door. Secretaries may enter with them to carry portfolios to the little writing



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*Photograph by Colonel and Mrs. Charles A. Lindbergh*

**A WHOLE LOST CIVILIZATION IS BEING COAXED OUT OF THE JUNGLE AT CHICHEN ITZÁ**

**New World versions of Egypt's pyramids and Greece's temples emerge from forests covering the leading city of the New Maya Empire, abandoned since the mid-15th century. Left foreground is a monastery group. Beyond rises the round tower of the Observatory. Astronomy helped make the Maya a scientific and mathematical people, with the most accurate calendars yet devised. Upper left lies the rectangle of a ball court, where Maya athletes played a game comparable to basketball. Top center stands the Castillo on its imposing pyramid—a temple to the Plumed Serpent. Upper right is the Court of a Thousand Columns, not yet completely unearthed, but already marked by the elaborately sculptured and painted Temple of the Warriors (Bulletin No. 3).**

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## Amur River Boundary Still Giant Question Mark

ON A MAP of eastern Asia the Amur River, defining part of the boundary between Manchukuo and Siberia, is curved like the head of a giant question mark. The Amur River is also a political question mark. News dispatches last month told of several sharp clashes between Russian and Manchukuoan troops over small islands in the river whose status has not been settled. Efforts to form a boundary commission have failed.

Closer examination of the map reveals that two sections of the disputed boundary are formed by branches of the Amur. Much of Manchukuo's western limits are outlined by the Argun, its eastern by the Ussuri, and the northern by the Amur River itself, into which the others flow.

### "Old Man River" of Northeastern Asia

Although these names may be unfamiliar to western ears, to the Asiatic their very sound is associated with business and politics. The Amur River is the most important artery of eastern Asia north of China's teeming Yangtze and Hwang Ho. It has done boundary duty since 1858, when China ceded to Russia its left bank. For two and a half centuries before that, it had been a channel for Russian eastward colonization of Siberia comparable to the Ohio-Mississippi channel for westward migration in the United States. In latitude and continental position it corresponds to the St. Lawrence.

The Amur, like the Ohio, is a full-grown river from its very start, for it is formed by the confluence of two eastward-flowing tributaries, the Skilka and the Argun.

The old Trans-Siberian Railway route and a more recently established airline roughly parallel the Amur's course, running about 50 or 75 miles north of it. The Trans-Siberian's other route, a new section of double track a couple of hundred miles north of the original line, follows the river valley north to its mouth.

The Amur Valley is the most thickly settled region in eastern Siberia; yet the population centers are still widely scattered. Siberia's "Old Man River," Amur, plays a leading role in transport. During seven months of hibernation under many feet of ice, it is a frozen highway for sledges. During its five flowing months, it is navigable for 2,000 of its 3,000 miles. The water communication it offers would be equivalent, in the United States, to sailing into the Chesapeake Bay and straight up a lengthened Potomac to Kansas City.

### "Black Dragon River" with Wealth of Timber and Gold

Control of this boundary river serves as a convenient exit from either Siberia or Manchukuo into the Pacific. Since the chief occupation of both countries is export of raw materials, the importance of transportation channels is obvious. The Amur's value is lessened by the northward trend of the final fourth of its course, which places its outlet to the sea near the upper tip of Sakhalin Island, a location both remote and too addicted to freezing over. Other drawbacks to navigation on the Amur are sand bars across its mouth and a score of dangerous rapids in its upper reaches.

Despite a modern trend toward developing local industries, both Siberia and Manchukuo are mainly valuable as Nature's storehouses for timber, coal, and gold. For about five months both countries can count also on some agriculture, and Manchukuo's soya bean crop has recently acquired international importance. Forests instead of farms, however, are the rule throughout most of the area drained by

desks, but are excluded before voting begins. Each ballot bears thirteen Latin words, freely translated as "I choose Cardinal X as the High Pontiff of the Diocese of Rome." Into a chalice on the altar each cardinal drops his ballot, folded with the candidate's name outside, and identified by a Bible verse.

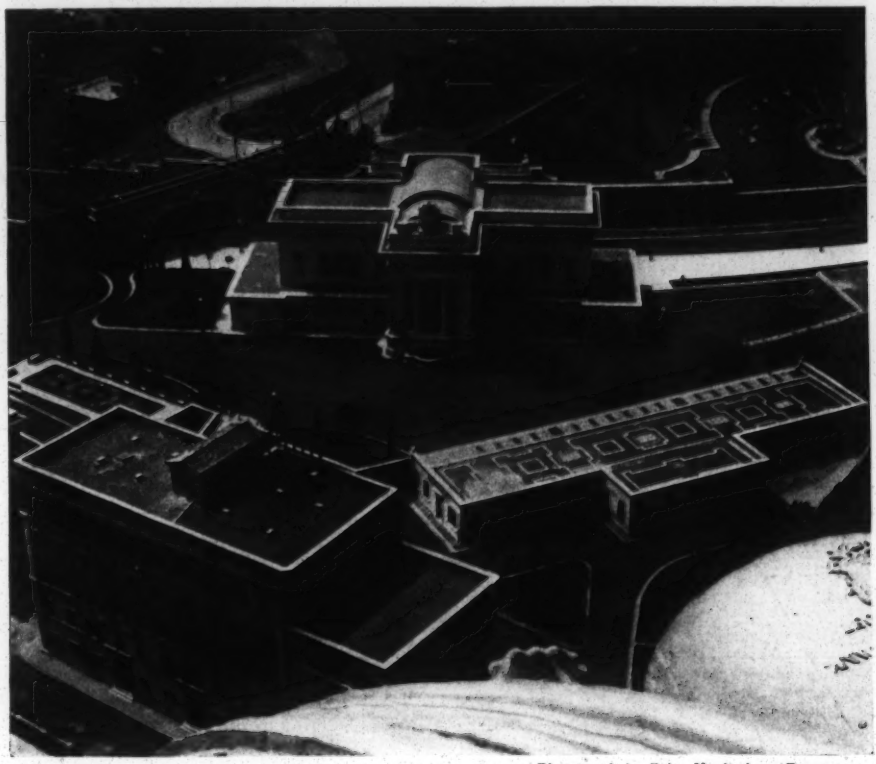
## Smoke Signals Penetrate Secrecy

As votes are counted aloud, each cardinal can unofficially record the score on a list of cardinals at his desk. If there is not a two-thirds majority for any candidate, the ballots are burned with straw in the little iron stove; the straw makes a black "No election" smoke signal to anxious watchers outside. The final ballots are burned without straw, and the thin wisp of grayish smoke announces to the public that the Papal throne is no longer vacant.

Note: A complete description of Vatican City appears in "The Smallest State in the World," with 29 illustrations and map, accompanied by an insert of 8 black and white photographs, published in the *National Geographic Magazine* for March, 1939.

Additional illustrations and text will be found in "Imperial Rome Reborn," March, 1937; "Horace—Classic Poet of the Countryside," December, 1935; "Italy, Land of History and Romance" (rotogravure insert), April, 1924; "The Splendor of Rome," June, 1922; and "From London to Australia by Aeroplane," March, 1921.

**Bulletin No. 1, March 6, 1939.**



*Photograph by Fritz Henle from European*

**RAILWAY AND JAIL SHARE A NOT-SO-BUSY CORNER OF VATICAN CITY**

**The Palace of Justice (left foreground) contains a law court rarely needed, and a jail which reports one prisoner. To the right spreads the one-story studio where the ancient art of mosaics is studied and practiced, using 28,000 stones of different hues to fit together in tiny fragments to form a picture. Pontifical dignity marks the railway station (center) for the shortest "national railroad" on record—2,615 feet of track, running south a half-mile to join the Rome-Viterbo line. Most arrivals in the "foreign country" of Vatican City, for which no passport is necessary, walk in across St. Peter's Square on the east. Both the mosaic studio and railway station were built during Pius XI's reign.**

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## Vera Cruz Finds Extend Limits of Maya Culture

A COLOSSAL sculptured head of stone and several inscribed monuments, some of them of the Maya culture, have been unearthed in a region of Mexico more than a hundred miles outside the previously known "Maya area." The discoveries were made near Tres Zapotes, in the State of Vera Cruz, by an expedition of the National Geographic Society and the Smithsonian Institution.

Archeologists are keenly interested in the finds because science has never before had such good evidence that the Maya civilization extended farther west than a north-south line crossing the western portion of the State of Tabasco, at the southern end of the Gulf of Mexico (map following Bulletin No. 2).

East and south of this line, in the States of Tabasco, Chiapas, Campeche and Yucatan, Mexico, and in parts of Guatemala, Honduras and British Honduras, are scores of ruined cities and thousands of elaborately carved monuments left by the Maya, whose native culture was the highest reached in the New World.

### Oldest Dated Mayan Object 98 B. C.

The only previous indication that Maya civilization reached farther westward along the Gulf coast was the finding, in 1902, of the Tuxtla Statuette, near the city of San Andres Tuxtla, Vera Cruz. This small carved object, now in the National Museum in Washington, bears a date in Maya numerals that has been interpreted as corresponding to 98 B.C. It is thus the oldest dated Maya object known to exist; but because it is light enough to be easily transported, archeologists were not agreed that Maya culture once flourished near San Andres Tuxtla.

The monuments now being uncovered by the Geographic-Smithsonian Expedition are near and even slightly farther west than San Andres Tuxtla. They are massive and are obviously in the situations in which they were erected. Their discovery not only extends to a considerable distance the known western limits of Maya civilization, but also confirms the significance of the Tuxtla Statuette.

One of the newly discovered monuments at Tres Zapotes bears a date in the same system of Maya numerals as those appearing on the Tuxtla Statuette. Although the corresponding year of the Christian calendar has not been worked out, the monument was apparently erected during early rather than late Maya times.

### Head Is Nearly Six Feet High

So important is the interpretation of this date considered that a number of American and Mexican archeologists have been invited to Tres Zapotes to confer with Matthew W. Stirling, of the Smithsonian Institution, who is in charge.

Thirty Mexican laborers are at work daily, excavating the plaza, surrounded by mounds, where the colossal head was discovered. Several carved monuments, or stelae, have been found protruding from the mounds. During the excavations the workmen have uncovered hundreds of pottery figurines of men and animals.

The colossal head, first object to be unearthed, is nearly six feet high from the base of the neck to the top of the headdress, and nearly 18 feet in circumference. The largest monument so far discovered is more than 17 feet long and nearly a foot and a half wide. Approximately 30 mounds, scattered over a distance of about two miles, have so far been mapped in the Tres Zapotes group.

Note: See also "Yucatan, Home of the Gifted Maya," *National Geographic Magazine*, November, 1936; "Preserving Ancient America's Finest Sculptures," November, 1935; "Unearthing America's Ancient History," July, 1931; "Chichen Itzá, an Ancient American Mecca," January, 1935; and "The Foremost Intellectual Achievements of Ancient America," February, 1922.

**Bulletin No. 3, March 6, 1939.**

the Amur. Dwarf oak and yellow pine reward lumbering activities around the middle Amur. The lower basin, with an added wealth of cedar, larch, and spruce, is reputed to contain the finest timber in Siberia.

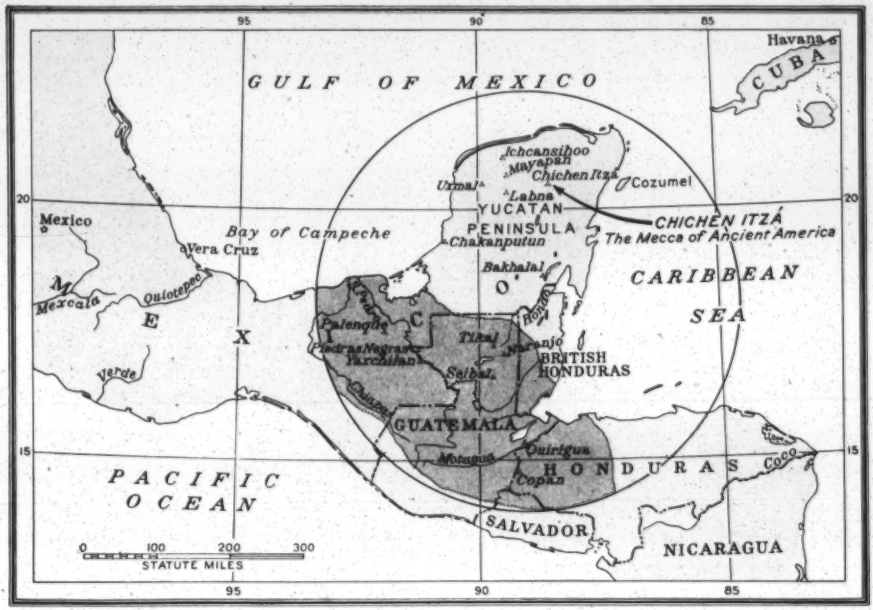
Another forest product lured Russian pioneers eastward as early as the 17th century; furs, especially sable. Fishing is now an important activity, especially during the salmon season. So plentiful are salmon that native tribes catch them by clubbing, and make clothing of fish skins.

"Amur" is a corruption of the Mongolian word for "river." "Black Dragon River" is the Chinese nickname for it. This Asiatic dragon hoards wealth more fabulous than that of the dragon of the Nibelungs. In the highlands north of Nerchinsk there are scattered gold mines. Farther east are deposits of silver and lead, and in the river's lower basin are rich gold-bearing areas again.

Russian trading posts established a half-century ago have grown into cities along its banks. Siberian metropolises of the Amur Valley are Blagoveshchensk and Khabarovsk, with theaters and clubs as well as banks and wharves. Russian colonists, intent on soldiering or farming or lumbering, once found it convenient to have a little colony of Chinese traders just across on the opposite bank of the Amur, and consequently many Russian settlements have a corresponding Mongolian town immediately across the water border. This proximity, having contributed to commerce both legal and illegal, is now promoting hostility.

Note: See also "Byroads and Backwoods of Manchuria," *National Geographic Magazine*, January, 1932; "First Airship Flight Around the World," June, 1930; "Manchuria, Promised Land of Asia," October, 1929; and "The Far Eastern Republic," June, 1922.

**Bulletin No. 2, March 6, 1939.**




*Drawn by James M. Darley*

**VERA CRUZ DISCOVERIES REVISE MAPS OF THE MAYA ZONE**

**Study of Maya sites led archeologists to believe that the Maya Empire covered a region through four Central American countries, lying within a radius of 400 miles from the northeastern corner of Guatemala. The southern part (heavy shading) was the home of these gifted Indians for a thousand years or more, before the great exodus took most of them northward into the Yucatan peninsula, between the 5th and 7th centuries A. D. Here they erected Chichen Itzá (indicated by the arrow), metropolis and Mecca of Maya culture. Monuments now being unearthed in the State of Vera Cruz reveal that Maya influence extended more than 100 miles farther west than had previously been supposed (Bulletin No. 3).**

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## Burgos Bustles as Insurgent Capital

WHILE Loyalist Spain has had four official capitals (Madrid, Valencia, Barcelona, and again Madrid), and several temporary seats of government during the course of the Civil War, the Insurgent forces of General Franco have carried on their civil activities during most of the 2¾ years of the conflict from one city, Burgos.

This ancient capital of the Province of Burgos, in north-central Spain, has been mentioned often in news dispatches recently as the center of negotiations between the Insurgent regime and Italy, Germany, the Vatican, and France.

Burgos had become exceedingly lively as the rebel capital. Its sleepy old streets and quiet plazas have awakened to the boots of marching men, the cheers of sidewalk throngs, and the hustle and bustle of messengers and officers hurrying between conferences and meetings.

### Once Capital of Old Castile

Dusty shop fronts have been replaced with modernistic cafes (illustration, next page) and flashing electric signs. Official cars, lumbering motor trucks, and sputtering motorcycles have shouldered ancient ox carts from the main streets. Blaring radios have nearly drowned out the chimes of its venerable cathedral, one of Spain's architectural gems.

With a peace-time population of only about 32,000, now more than doubled, Burgos does not rank as one of the major cities of the Iberian peninsula, but it is rich in historic associations and architectural treasures. The city was the capital of Old Castile until 1087, when the royal residence was transferred to Toledo.

In Burgos was born "El Cid," the national hero of Spain in the struggle to reconquer the country from the Moors. The site of his home is visited by thousands of tourists annually in normal times. Burgos' fine cathedral is a massive Gothic edifice, dating from 1221, that was 300 years in construction.

### Countryside Resembles Tableland of Mexico

Today Burgos is an important railroad and highway junction. Most of its modern commerce is that of a distributing center for a wide farming region, whose irrigated fields form green patchwork along the valley of the Arlanzon River.

Much of the district surrounding the city is arid and barren, like parts of the tableland of Mexico; but where water is to be had good crops grow—chiefly grains and chick peas.

The city itself huddles around a small hill crowned with the traditional Spanish castle, a picturesque ruin which once successfully resisted the forces of the mighty Wellington. In the shadow of this crumbling fortress rises the old Cathedral.

At the outskirts of Burgos stands the Cistercian Convent of Las Huelgas to which only noble women were admitted. Its abbess was a princess-palatine, and for 500 years ranked second only to the queen of Spain.

Note: See also "Turbulent Spain," *National Geographic Magazine*, October, 1936; "A Palette from Spain," March, 1936; "On the Bypaths of Spain," March, 1929; and "Cathedrals of the Old and New World," July, 1922.

Burgos may be located on the map of Spain which was published in the GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETINS for October 5, 1936.

**Bulletin No. 4, March 6, 1939.**

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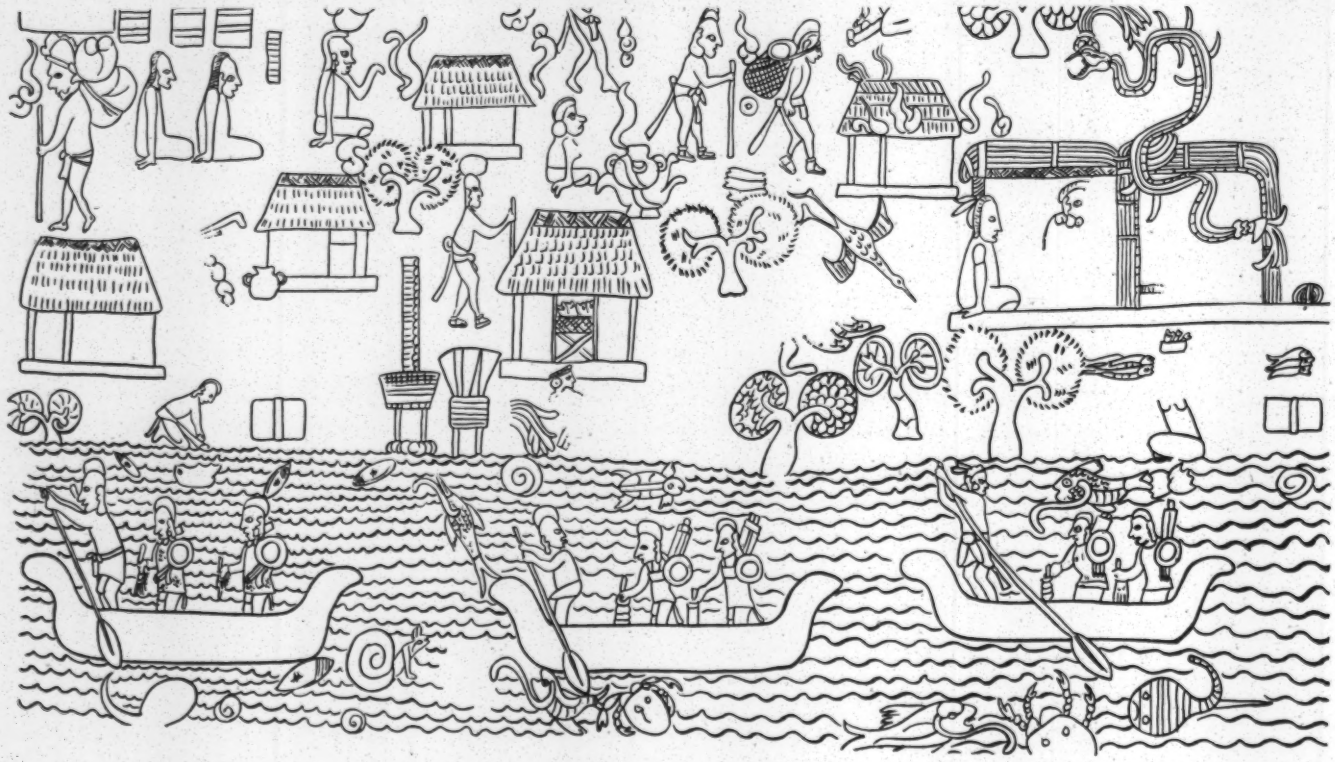

*Photograph from Carnegie Institution of Washington*

**THIS BUSY MAYA VILLAGE LIFE WAS INTERRUPTED AND DESPOILED BY SPANISH EXPLORERS**

**Frescoes painted across fifty-seven stones in the Temple of the Warriors at Chichen Itzá, Mexico, show the Maya artist's conception of how his people lived. In a typical village of the Yucatan coast, before Columbus came to the New World, fishing was important. Three boats are skimming the sea, which teems with crabs, snails, fish, and a turtle near shore. On the palm-bordered bank kneels a woman grinding corn. Above the trees a heron darts seaward after a fish. The symbolic plumed serpent protects what is probably the temple (right).**

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## British Columbia, Storehouse of Canada's Far West

CANADA'S geographical secrets are rapidly being revealed with the growth of aviation. Aerial cameras in recent years have been focused on mountains and valleys, and mapmakers have filled in blank spots representing thousands of square miles.

In 1935, the National Geographic Society's Yukon Expedition photographed and mapped a vast area in northwest Canada, and last month an aviator reported sighting an unmapped chain of lofty peaks in the northern part of British Columbia.

### Once a Crown Colony

British Columbia is largely a land of lofty peaks and deep fertile valleys spreading over an area larger than all of the Pacific States of the United States—Washington, Oregon, and California. Many of its mountains are unscaled and unnamed, and great areas of the province are known only to Indians or prospectors.

The coast of British Columbia was discovered in 1774, nearly three centuries after Canada's Atlantic Coast was sighted. Crown colony status came in 1858, and thirteen years later British Columbia joined the provinces of the Dominion of Canada.

Glowing reports of the discovery of precious metals, and known wealth in timber, fish, and fertile lands attracted streams of immigrants. In the first quarter of the present century, the population trebled.

### Sends Fruit to Eastern Canada

Chinese and Japanese were welcomed in the early days of settlement to work in the various industries. But so great was the influx of Orientals that Chinese immigration was forbidden, Japanese restricted. Nearly 25,000 Indians live in the province today (illustration, next page).

In spite of its rugged mountains, agriculture is the province's leading industry. It has not, however, been fully developed. There are 20 million acres of tillable land, but barely a tenth has been farmed. Specially suited to fruit-growing, British Columbian valleys have shipped apples as far away as eastern Canada to compete with fruit grown in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley.

British Columbia fishes for much of its commerce. Salmon, halibut, herring, and cod slide by the shipload from nets to markets and canneries. Owing to the great demand for salmon, hatcheries have been established on rivers where the fish run. Another development in the fishing industry is extraction of oil from whales and dogfish.

### Mercury Found in Mining Regions

Gold was the first mineral to be mined, and still is important among the province's mineral resources. In recent years, however, lead, copper, coal, zinc, and silver have shoved gold down to sixth place in the mineral output. British Columbia is Canada's chief copper producer. It also supplies that rare mineral so important to munitions makers, mercury.

British Columbia trees find their way into world timber markets. Most important of the province's trees is the Douglas fir, which grows to a height of about 300 feet on a trunk eight to ten feet in diameter at its base. Ship and building contractors like Douglas fir because it is tough and strong.




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© *Ap from Pictures, Inc.*

**MODERNISTIC SHOP FRONTS MARK CHANGING BURGOS AS A WARTIME "CAPITAL"**

**Inhabitants of the city where the Spanish Insurgents had their headquarters give the Fascist salute to columns of rebel militiamen marching off to reinforce the picket lines around Madrid. Sleepy old Burgos has prospered as a result of the concentration of Insurgent governmental activities here during the Civil War.**

Canada's chief Pacific port and No. 1 city of the province today, Vancouver, owes its increasing commercial importance to the shipment of wheat.

### Capital, Victoria, on an Island

Eighty miles across the Strait of Georgia from Vancouver is Victoria, capital of British Columbia. A typical English city, it spreads over the southern end of Vancouver Island.

Steamers regularly serve other ports on the fjordlike coast, and furnish the easiest method of reaching the region for travelers to the province's several national parks.

Note: Descriptions and photographs of British Columbia will be found in the following: "Tweedsmuir Park: The Diary of a Pilgrimage," *National Geographic Magazine*, April, 1938; "Canada's Awakening North," and accompanying large wall map supplement in colors of Canada, June, 1936; "Peaks and Trails in the Canadian Alps" (duotone insert), May, 1934; "'Nakwasina' Goes North," July, 1933; and "Canada from the Air," October, 1926.

**Bulletin No. 5, March 6, 1939.**

*Photograph by Jack Calvin*

**TOTEM POLES ARE SCULPTURED "GOSSIP"**

**Indians of British Columbia's west coast and Alaska developed the totem pole as a way of publicly talking about themselves and their neighbors. The pole's grotesque carvings correspond in some cases to a coat of arms. Family crests are combined with heads of totem animals, which are tribal symbols, and sometimes with portraits of neighbors who are held up to ridicule. From a base a yard wide, the totem poles rise sometimes to a height of 50 feet, often hollowed in the back to decrease weight. Raven, eagle, and hawk are favorite bird subjects. Other popular totem animals are the beaver, the grizzly bear, and the whale. The single street of Indian town, Alert Bay, on the coast of British Columbia, shows Indian totem poles facing the white man's poles for carrying electricity.**